TAB

FORMS control has come of age and is now accepted as vital to a successful management program. The United States Government has not lagged behind in this work. On the contrary, many agencies of Government have long operated successful programs designed to keep to a minimum the number of forms in use to make their forms as efficient as it is possible to make them. Large savings to the taxpayer have resulted from these programs.

The United States Civil Service Commission is one of the many agencies of the Federal Government which have active programs to control the forms used in all of their operations. In some respects the Commission's forms problems are unique, since it is responsible for prescribing Government-wide personnel forms as well as its own operating forms.

The Commission's organization consists of a central office in Washington and 14 regional offices in as many cities. Each regional office is in reality a miniature Civil Service Commission, as it performs many of the same functions performed by the central office. Operations are therefore practically standard among all of these offices. This means that forms used for standard operations must be controlled on an organization-wide basis. In other words, it is not practical or economical to permit different offices to use different forms for the same function.

The whole matter of forms control is vital to the Commission. Its complex operations seem to demand more and more forms; printing costs have greatly increased in recent years; forms must be stocked, shipped, and handled. Therefore there must be controls to prevent unnecessary forms from coming into being and to effect economies in printing and handling of the necessary forms. The Commission's forms control makes it possible to prescribe forms to be used for Commission-wide operations, which in turn permits these forms to be printed in large quantities. This not only effects economies in printing costs, but also assures the use of the prescribed form for each function.

Much has been written about "forms control" in recent years. Therefore, this article will not deal with the more familiar aspects of a forms control program,

Decentralized Forms Control

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How the Civil Service Commission maintains control of forms and prevents duplication of forms even though the actual control function has been decentralized.

such as forms analysis, functional classification, forms design, and numbering systems. It will instead describe how the Civil Service Commission, when faced with the necessity of reducing its forms control staff, solved the problem of maintaining adequate forms control on a decentralized basis.

DECENTRALIZING CONTROL

The Civil Service Commission for several years has been operating a "decentralized" forms control program with excellent results. The important thing about this program is that control of forms which are used on a Commission-wide basis is adequately maintained even though the point of clearance and approval of the majority of forms has been decentralized from the central staff level to the operating level.

Prior to the adoption of this program, the Commission had conducted a centralized program. In other words, all forms were cleared through channels up to the central forms staff, where the functional analysis, design or redesign, numbering, etc., was performed and the form approved for printing. This worked well enough when adequate staff was available to perform these functions, but it bogged down when the staff was severely reduced because of limited

funds for this work. The result was that the limited forms staff had to confine itself mainly to routine work.

The situation was studied and a new and different forms control program resulted. Here is what was done:

1. A forms control handbook was prepared which covers all phases of forms work from procedural instructions for initiating and clearing forms, to stocking them after they are printed. (Each person having responsibilities under the program must be familiar with this handbook.)

2. Each operating division in the central office and each regional office was required to designate a person to spend part time as the "forms control employee" of the division or region. (This person is completely responsible for the program within the division or region.)

3. The forms control employees were trained in forms design, functional classification, forms analysis, and all other phases of forms work.

4. A new system of numbering forms was devised which indicates forms used on a Commission-wide basis, and those used

only within a division or regional office.

5. Provision was made for continuous review and study of forms at the operating level.

6. A functional classification index of forms used on a Commission-wide basis was developed and supplied to each forms control employee.

7. A small central staff was retained to clear and approve all Commission-wide forms, conduct special studies of personnel forms used throughout the Government, and provide training and leadership for the program.

CLEARANCE OF FORMS

Each operating division and regional office controls the forms used only by the division or region. The respective forms control employees are responsible for the functional analysis, design, and numbering of these forms. They do not clear through the central forms staff. This makes for speed in handling these forms and provides adequate control by personnel familiar with the operations and procedures of the division or region. These division and regional forms make up a large percentage of all of the Commission's forms. The central staff is thereby relieved of the job of analyzing, designing and approving them. While this represents a large percentage of all of the Commission's forms, each individual division or region has only a small number of forms. Therefore the forms control employees devote only part time to this work. It was not necessary to add a single position in any division or region to handle this forms work when the change-over to the decentralized program was made.

Forms used on an agency-wide basis are cleared by the central forms staff and this staff is responsible for design, clearance, and numbering of such forms. All contacts with the divisions and regions on matters pertaining to forms are made with the forms control employees. This provides a direct channel between the central staff and the divisions and regions. No form used on a Commission-wide basis is considered for clearance which does not have the approval of the appropriate forms control employee. This means that it is seldom necessary for the central staff to make extensive studies regarding a proposed new or revised form, since the forms control employee has taken care of all these matters in his review.

PREVENTING DUPLICATION

Of course, the weakness in a program such as this could very well be the duplication of existing forms by new forms, since divisions or regions promulgating forms for their own use are not required to clear them with the central staff. In other words, if division A has a form which division B should use in lieu of one which it proposes to promulgate, what is to stop division B from issuing a new form, which would result in two forms serving the same purpose? It is well known that this can happen and probably does in many cases where adequate controls are not established. This problem has been solved in two ways:

(a) Forms which can be used by two or more divisions or regions are issued as CSC forms.

(b) A functional classification index of CSC forms is supplied to each forms control employee.

Each division or regional forms control employee must determine that no other division or region can use a form before it is issued as a division or regional form. (The forms control handbook contains instructions on how to make this determination.) If the form can be used by other divisions or regions, it is issued as a CSC form and cleared through the central forms staff. Hence CSC forms are developed by the operating division having jurisdiction over the operation for which the form

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION INDEX

OF

CSC, STANDARD, AND OPTIONAL FORMS

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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CSC Forms are listed by numbers with no prefix. Standard Form numbers are prefixed by the letters "SF". Optional Form numbers are prefixed by the letters "OF".

This Index controls all forms used on a Commission-wide basis.

,is needed. These forms, of course, are cleared by all interested divisions. The central forms staff assists in perfecting the form when necessary and satisfies itself that the form is essential and satisfactory. These forms are then printed in quantities sufficient to supply all users. They are stocked centrally and are issued on requisition to the using divisions and regions. All divisions and regions are required to use CSC forms when applicable. They are not permitted to substitute division or regional forms.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION INDEX

All CSC forms are listed in the functional classification index of CSC forms. This index is simple, but very effective. Each form is classified by the function which it serves. This classification is brief but entirely descriptive of the function of the form. For example, a requisition form would be classified thus: "To request supplies and equipment from central stock".

There are some 20 breakdowns which represent the operations for which the Commission's forms are used. For example, "Examining" pertains to all forms used in the examining function; "Medical" includes all forms pertaining to the medical function; "Supplies and Equipment" refers to forms used in requisitioning, stocking, and issuing supplies and equipment. This requisition form mentioned above would be listed under "Supplies and Equipment."

This index is printed on loose-leaf pages, 8"x10½". Each page contains the functional description of from 12 to 15 forms, depending upon the length of the descriptions. The sheets are inserted in loose-leaf binders with dividers and tabs for each breakdown. A copy of the index is furnished to each forms control employee and is kept current by the substitution of pages on which there have been changes (new forms added, classification changed because of revision of the form, or classification withdrawn because the form is obsolete). The central forms staff maintains the index and distributes the revised pages.

The functional classification of each form is punched on tabulating cards. These cards are automatically sorted and the pages printed on the tabulating machines.

Maintenance is simple. The punched cards are removed when forms are made obsolete and new cards inserted in their proper places for new or revised forms. Only pages on which there have been changes are rerun.

THE INDEX IN USE

As mentioned above, each division and regional forms control employee has a copy of the functional classification index. In reviewing a request for a new or revised form, the forms control employee first classifies the form by function. This classification is complete with the description of the function of the form and the breakdown under which it falls. The next step is to check under the corresponding breakdown in the index to see if there is an existing CSC form which serves the same function as the proposed form. If a form which serves the same or a similar function is located in the index, a copy of the form is compared with the proposed form and, if they are similar, the proposed form is rejected and the operating unit notified to use the CSC form for the purpose for which they intended using the new form.

It can be readily seen that the advantages of this index are many. Those familiar with forms work know that a numerical file will not serve this purpose. Where there are a large number of forms it is impossible (or at least very time-consuming) to attempt to locate forms functionally in a numerically arranged file. (There are 543 CSC forms.) Further, an ordinary functional file of copies of the forms will not serve this purpose since there are 30 divisions and regions which develop and issue forms. It would be an extravagant duplication to have each of these offices maintain such a file of CSC forms. By putting the classification in words on sheets in loose-leaf binders, the necessity for the maintenance of such files is eliminated.

The tabulating method of producing and maintaining this index is inexpensive and quick. There is no typing job, no mimeographing, etc. Continuous 5-

		STATUS
68		TO ACKNOWLEDGE INQUIRY AND INFORM THAT CASE IS RECEIVING CONSIDERATION
265		TO REQUEST FROM SERVICE RECORD DIVISION INFORMATION RE DCE WHO HAS FILED APPLICATION IN FIELD
3395		TO AUTHORIZE CLASSIFICATION OF POSTMASTER SUBJECT TO SATISFACTORY FINGERPRINT REPORT
3696		TO REQUEST CSC TO AUTHORIZE A CLASSIFIED STATUS UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER 8744
3820		TO AUTHORIZE CLASSIFICATION OF SPECIFIED INDIVIDUAL
3820A		TO AUTHORIZE CLASSIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL UNDER RAMSPECK ACT AND EO 8743
4929		TO NOTIFY AGENCY OF ACTION TAKEN ON REQUEST FOR CONVERSION UNDER CIVIL SERVICE REGULATIONS 3 106 AND 3 102
SF	48	TO REQUEST CLASSIFICATION UNDER RAMSPECK ACT AND SEC 1 OF EO 8743
SF	49	TO REQUEST CLASSIFICATION UNDER RAMSPECK ACT AND SEC 6 OF EO 8743
SF	53	TO REQUEST CLASSIFICATION UNDER SEC 1 OF EO 8833

Figure from one of the sections of the Functional Classification Index.

part tabulating paper is used and the cards are run through the machine six times to produce 30 copies. This does not represent a large amount of work since an average of only 15 to 20 sheets are run at any one time.

The functional classification index is otherwise used the same way as the functional classification file in other forms control systems. It is used by the forms analysts to bring together groups of forms serving similar functions for study for possible consolidation and elimination, for checking possible duplication of forms, and for locating forms when the form numbers are not known.

Each division and region also maintains a functional file of the division and regional forms which they control. This file is the same as the CSC index, except that the functional descriptions are on 5x3" cards, filed under the same breakdowns as those used in the CSC index. This file is used for the same purpose as the CSC index except that it is for division and regional forms.

OTHER FEATURES

The program provides for continuous studies of forms at the operating level. Supervisors and other operating personnel work with the forms control employees in constantly reviewing the forms which they use in their work. Procedures are reviewed as forms are studied. This has resulted in elimination of hundreds of forms which are found to be no longer necessary or which duplicated similar forms. Many similar forms were combined as the result of these studies. The effectiveness of this type of forms studies is demonstrated by the fact that during

the first nine months the program was in operation 2,676 forms were declared obsolete, 162 forms were eliminated through consolidation with other forms, and 757 forms were improved in content or format. No central staff could possibly make such thorough studies of the forms of all divisions and regions as are obtained by this method.

Another development of this program in which progress is being made is the use of preprinted offset masters for printing locally those forms which require overprinting. Many of the CSC forms require overprinting of the regional office address or other information, or both. This required the printing and stocking of the forms in Washington and then shipping to the regional offices in 14 different cities in all parts of the country. The forms were then overprinted in the regional offices by mimeograph or multilith machines or hand-stamped. This, of course, resulted in double printing costs as well as shipping the forms from Washington.

Some of these forms are now being printed on offset masters and the masters stocked in the central office. The masters are requisitioned by the regions and the information which previously had been overprinted is typed on the master and the entire form run off at one time on the multilith machine. Control of the form is maintained, since the form is printed on the master and these are purchased and stocked only by the central office in Washington. This system eliminates excessive shipping costs since the paper is purchased locally, and it eliminates double printing costs. As mentioned, control over the contents and format of the form is retained.

TOWARDS MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS

The advantages of this system, as seen after more than two years' operation, are:

1. Decentralization of the control function has made it possible to do a thorough forms control job with a limited central staff. This staff is now able to devote time to special forms studies and clearance of CSC forms, as well as to the over-all direction of the program.

2. Continuous studies of forms at the operating level have produced results far beyond those obtainable by a central forms staff. Forms are kept current, improvements are made, and unnecessary forms are eliminated.

3. Centralized printing of forms used on a Commission-wide basis results in savings in printing costs.

4. The use of prescribed forms by all regional offices and divisions eliminates duplication and the resultant multitude of unnecessary forms. There is no duplication of forms used on a Commission-wide basis by regional or division forms, even though the control function has been decentralized.

The system has eliminated duplication and waste. It has provided control of forms on an agency-wide basis. This is essential to the success of any forms program.